

Herald-Independent

OPINION

—The Herald-Independent—

Baldwin secures funds for MATC training programs

The House of Representatives recently passed legislation to provide \$500,000 to Madison Area Technical College (MATC) for the training of closed captioners. U.S. Senator Herb Kohl and Representative Tammy Baldwin announced.

The funds will be used to recruit students, provide scholarships, develop education, training and distance learning programs, and assist with job placement efforts.

The 1996 Telecommunications Act requires that all new video programming be 100 percent closed captioned by 2006. Experts predict there will not be enough closed captioners to meet the new mandates.

Twenty-eight million deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans rely on closed captioning to provide information in their civic, educational and professional lives.

The provisions were included in the final version of the Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2002. House and Senate committees have been working to draft a bill that would be acceptable to both houses. The final version passed the House today by a vote of 393-30. Senate passage is expected later this week.

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (WI-02) requested funding for the project in the House and worked closely with Congressman Dave Obey (WI-07), ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee.

"Being a trained captioner provides the flexibility and opportunity to earn a good wage to support a family while filling a critical need," said Baldwin. "This is especially important for women and rural residents who can then remain at home or continue to work on the family farm."

Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and its subcommittee on Labor-HHS Appropriations, and he identified this project as a priority for funding.

"Congress passed a law that requires captioning for broadcast programs, and now, in light of a shortage of captioners, it's imperative that we help create more opportunities for people to fill this need. This is a common-sense investment of federal funds, so I'm glad this program will get the support it needs," Kohl said.

Baldwin was also successful in securing another \$500,000 in federal funds for an innovative local project to identify, train and place people with disabilities in information technology careers.

The funding for TechWorks, a partnership of the WI Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, MATC, CompTIA Educational Foundation, the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin, and the TechWorks Business Advisory

Council, was included in the fiscal year 2002 Labor, HHS, Education Bill passed yesterday by the House of Representatives.

"People with disabilities have

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• Techworks

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much to contribute to our workforce and our economy," said Baldwin. "TechWorks offers a great way to help individuals find satisfying careers and help businesses meet their staffing needs in this information age."

"We are very pleased with this federal-state partnership and the prospects that it will bring for people with disabilities who want to work in the IT field. This is an excellent opportunity for people with disabilities to get the training they need to excel and a great recruitment tool for businesses as well. We greatly appreciate Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin's efforts in helping to secure this funding," said Department of Workforce Development Secretary Jennifer Reinert.

TechWorks is a self-paced program that will recruit and train people with disabilities to be help desk/computer support specialists or PC technicians through an individualized training program.